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EC65-163 Certified Alfalfa Seed in Today's Agriculture

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
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Certified

ALFALFA SEED IN TODAY'S AGRICULTURE

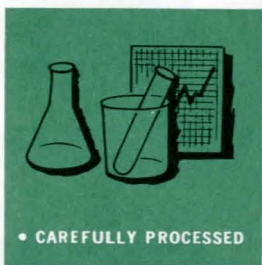
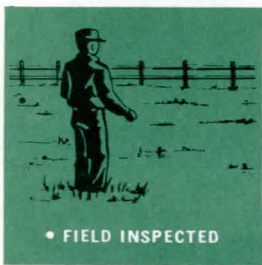


CERTIFICATION PUTS THE
FACT IN SATISFACTION

Extension Service
University of Nebraska
College of Agriculture and Home Economics
and U. S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating
E. F. Frolik, Dean E. W. Janike, Director

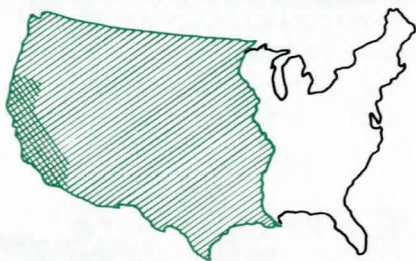
WHAT IS CERTIFIED ALFALFA SEED?

Certified seed is seed of improved varieties which has been grown, processed and labeled under the supervision of an impartial certifying agency. In the United States each state has an official certifying agency, usually recognized by state law—Crop Improvement Associations, they are called in most states. These agencies are made up of farmers who produce certified seed and who support the program and pay fees to the agency for performing the certification service. Each certification agency is closely affiliated with the state agricultural experiment station. In Canada the official seed certification program is a function of the dominion government and of the Canadian Seed Growers Association. Elsewhere in the world certification is usually a function of the national government. Seed certification is a vehicle whereby seed may be produced outside of its region of adaptation, yet retain the performance characteristics which are important. Regardless of where the seed is grown, certification procedure assures varietal purity.



WHERE IS CERTIFIED ALFALFA SEED GROWN?

Virtually all of the certified alfalfa seed grown in the United States is produced west of the Mississippi River. A high percentage is grown in the far western states where favorable climate normally makes possible the production of bright, healthy pure seed. The producers of this certified seed grow it much as one would grow a crop of corn, that is, for the seed alone. Hay or forage is usually secondary. Harmful insects are carefully controlled. Pollinators (honey bees and certain wild bees) are provided to help insure seed yields. Everything possible in the way of favorable production practices is done to produce seed which meets the certification standard.

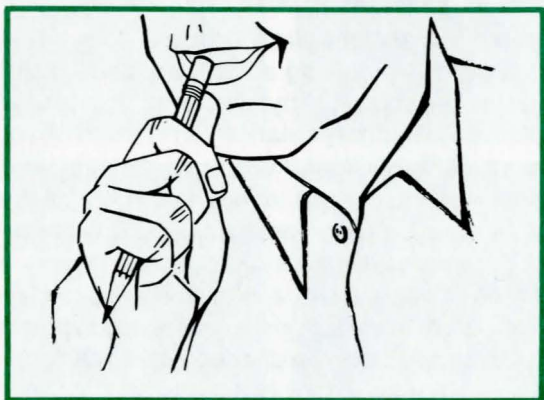


WHICH ALFALFA VARIETIES ARE CERTIFIED?

Certified alfalfa seed may be of varieties developed by either public experiment stations or private company research. In either case the variety is considered by a National Certified Alfalfa Variety Review Board, made up of leading plant breeders, seed certification officials and members of the seed trade. This board decides whether the variety merits certification. They require a description of the variety and its pedigree. They make sure that the variety has been adequately tested and that it is truly different from other varieties. Once approved by the National Review Board, a variety must still be accepted by a state certifying agency.

WHICH VARIETY TO PLANT?

As an American farmer you now can choose from a number of outstanding alfalfa varieties. Your state agricultural experiment stations can provide you with information on varieties that do best in your area. New varieties are on the way. Many of these are probably now under test by your state experiment station. Right now over 40 varieties of alfalfa are being certified. Before planting, check with your county agent, experiment station worker, or with your local seed company representative. You'll find a certified alfalfa variety for every use. Improved varieties resist diseases, insects, and drought, have better winter hardiness, rapid recovery, and greater yielding capacity than older alfalfa strains. It's no wonder that farmers are shifting rapidly to improved varieties. Now they can be sure of getting and keeping a good stand. They can avoid diseases like bacterial wilt, which once cost American farmers \$100 million each year. Farmers in northern areas, where hard winters once killed out whole fields can now be sure of purchasing winter-hardy varieties. Your best bet may be to try several varieties recommended for your area. Choose those that suit your cropping and livestock needs.



HOW DOES SEED CERTIFICATION WORK?

First the farmer planning to grow certified seed must plant seed drawn from a basic stock which is under the control of the breeder of the variety. He must plant this seed on land where alfalfa has not been grown for a specified number of years. He must be sure that the field is far enough away from fields growing other alfalfa varieties to avoid cross-breeding. He must also file an application with the certifying agency. This begins the pedigree record which remains in the certification office. Certification officials inspect each field during the blooming period. They check to be sure that no other varieties are present in the field and that isolation from other fields is adequate. The producer must harvest and clean his seed under the supervision of the certifying agency. Each lot of seed is carefully tested to be sure that it meets certification standards for high mechanical purity, minimum weed content or crop mixture. Germination must be high. Seed meeting all requirements is tagged or labeled, and sealed by the certifying agency. Only seed bearing an official tag or label of a certifying agency is legally certified. Only seed so grown and processed can be called "certified." Under this system of certification the seed can always be identified by the code number on the label.

WHY IS VARIETAL PURITY IMPORTANT?

Hereditary factors largely control such characteristics as yielding ability and disease and insect resistance. Anything that upsets this delicate hereditary balance can change one or more of these important characteristics and performance may no longer equal that of the true variety. During production and processing of seed strict precautions must be taken to preserve the purity of a variety. Foreign pollen from other varieties, or volunteer plants that produce seed may so change variety performance that it no longer compares with that ob-

served in original evaluation trials. Many studies demonstrate the genetic shift which may occur when seed is produced outside the region of adaptation under conditions of the limited generation system such as provided by certification. The word "certified" on the seed assures that the proper steps have been taken to guard against serious changes taking place.

WHY PLANT CERTIFIED ALFALFA SEED?

The use of certified seed offers a farmer the best assurance of obtaining the varietal purity and the true performance of the variety designated on the seed tag. The word "certified" is assurance that an official certification agency made certain inspections during the production and processing of the seed to determine whether adequate precautions were being followed to protect the varietal purity and quality. Only seed produced and processed according to these rigid standards may carry the certified seed label. Buy certified alfalfa seed and be sure!



Produced Under Direction of Certified Alfalfa Seed Council